



Hillside Medical Office Case Study

Hillside Medical Partners with Pulse to Quickly Achieve
Meaningful Use

The practice and its goals

Hillside Medical Office LLC is a group of seven board-certified family medicine physicians and 40 employees with a tradition of medical excellence that dates back to 1947. Hillside Medical began its search in 2009 for a certified electronic health record (EHR) solution soon after the passage of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act of 2009. Hillside Medical's search focused on finding an integrated EHR and practice management (PM) solution that would accomplish key objectives, including:

- ▶ Improving workflow efficiencies and profitability;
- ▶ Enabling the practice to achieve government Meaningful Use objectives; and
- ▶ Assisting physicians in the delivery of quality patient care.

"We started looking at a large number of vendors and after initial assessments narrowed the search to three companies," said David A. Gordon, CPA and Practice Administrator at Hillside Medical. Gordon added that "all three companies did onsite presentations. All functional areas of responsibility within the practice participated in the evaluation in order to confirm that the solution selected would meet their needs. The combined team effort also allowed each participant to be a part of implementing a solution that was best for the practice as a whole."

The Pulse solution – product and support

After a formal system selection process, Hillside Medical purchased from Pulse Systems, Inc. (Pulse) its Healthcare IT Solution which includes PulsePro Practice Management and 2011 Pulse Complete EHR. Hillside Medical felt Pulse separated itself from the others in four key areas:

- ▶ The flexibility of the product to meet the specific needs of the practice;
- ▶ The seamless integration between PM and EHR; Pulse's experience in leading successful EHR implementations and meeting the needs of the physicians and their teams;
- ▶ Pulse's commitment to complying with and adapting to changing requirements as demonstrated by their ONC Certification; and
- ▶ Pulse's track record of providing exceptional ongoing customer support as a healthcare partner.

Pulse earns unanimous approval

"After the presentations, each staffing area within our practice unanimously chose Pulse for both the EHR and PM solution," Gordon said.

Why the overwhelming support for the Pulse Solution?

- ▶ Flexibility – Each physician could use their own custom templates and dashboard;
- ▶ Integrated solution – The EHR worked seamlessly with the PM solution, eliminating duplicate data entry; and
- ▶ Strong support – "We liked the fact that Pulse was able to provide us with hardware and software support so we didn't have to work with multiple vendors pointing fingers at each other if we encountered problems, stated Gordon.

The completeness of the Pulse solution was another catalyst for the overwhelming support. Gordon stated, “The clinical side of the Pulse solution was more robust than those offered by the other vendors, and I specifically liked the functionality within the messaging capabilities that provided strong, necessary, immediate documentation without extra time-consuming steps other vendors required. One simple example is that Pulse automatically date-stamps messages and tasks. With the PulsePro PM solution, the coding, billing and collections capabilities were much smoother than the other solutions we evaluated.”

Implementation and support

Hillside Medical purchased the Pulse solution in April 2010 and began using it in May. The implementation process began with a kick-off call to coordinate the training and configuration process. The call established the coordinated dialogue and expectations of each party. It also allowed Hillside Medical to communicate any distinctive needs that should be considered during implementation as well as in utilization of the product. . Once expectations were set, implementation commenced.

All of Hillside Medical’s employees participated in online, interactive training provided by Pulse, followed by onsite training with Pulse trainers before go-live. The PM solution went live in mid-May with patient scheduling, billing and messaging. “Pulse was with us during every step of the implementation process,” said Gordon. Patient demographic and insurance information from Hillside Medical’s previous PM system was electronically converted and scrubbed for accuracy.

As training continued, Pulse developed the interface electronically linking the PulseEHR and the practice’s internal laboratory information system and the external reference lab, allowing for immediate integration of lab results into the electronic record. In addition, Hillside Medical transitioned easily from their previous electronic prescription system to the Pulse ePrescribing module. “We used the lab and ePrescribing components of the EHR for a couple of months as everyone developed confidence in using the system,” Gordon said. “Next we started using the PulseEHR at the point-of-care to fully document the patient visit.”

Physician leadership drives EHR adoption

“All of our physicians were committed to making the transition to an EHR and were actively involved in the selection process, but one physician led our efforts from the very beginning of the implementation process,” Gordon said. “This physician was instrumental in getting us through the selection and implementation processes. She was also the first person to start using the EHR at the point-of care level and worked on creating and refining the templates.”

Other physicians at Hillside Medical appreciated having a physician super-user on board to champion the implementation and training process. “She was then able to assist the other physicians as they adopted the new technology. Having a physician run out in front of us like that was very beneficial to me as I was able to learn from her and know that this could be done,” said Kim Hartwell, M.D., a physician at Hillside Medical.

As some Hillside Medical staff focused on refining the personalized templates to meet the particular needs of their physicians, the administrative team focused on workflow best practices to help them achieve Meaningful Use requirements. “We worked with Pulse on each step of the process, and they helped us figure out how we could incorporate the elements of Meaningful Use requirements into our workflow,” stated Gordon.

Adapting workflows to EHR

The physicians and nurses access the EHR from hardware devices of their choice including PCs and tablet computers to view and record data during patient visits. Nurses record patient vital signs before physicians meet with the patient. “It’s important for the nurses to record the patient’s height, weight, blood pressure and other vitals as well as checking medications and allergies to meet Meaningful Use requirements, not to mention proper patient care.”

Perhaps the biggest adjustment for physicians was the transition from dictating notes to entering discrete information into the EHR. “Some of the physicians adapted to this change more easily than others, but all of them have improved and continue to get better at this. I am very proud of them.” Gordon added.

“Learning to use the Pulse EHR was easier than I expected. I’m not saying that it was easy, but I was prepared to work hard at it and have reaped the benefits,” said Dr. Hartwell, “Interacting with patients and the EHR was difficult at first, but I learned to work face-to-face with the patients and the system at the same time. Now, I engage patients with the system, show them the screens, and let them see the information. They think it’s really cool, and some of them really appreciate the patient summaries that I am able to print out at the end of the visit.”

Meaningful Use, the Pulse partnership

Hillside Medical worked with the Kansas Regional Extension Center to select the Clinical Quality Measures that the physicians would utilize to demonstrate its Meaningful Use of a Complete EHR. They also worked closely with the Pulse team to:

- ▶ Fully understand the data collection process;
- ▶ Clarify procedures to follow in order to meet Meaningful Use;
- ▶ Customize reports for tracking Meaningful Use measures; and
- ▶ Test the Meaningful Use Dashboards prior to attestation.

Hillside Medical began measuring its progress toward meeting the Meaningful Use requirements in early 2011. “The Pulse system allowed me to run reports that measured our progress,” Gordon said. “With the reports, I could see how each physician was doing on every requirement. This was especially beneficial on the ones which required a conscious change in practice flow such as providing patient summaries and establishing discreet data problem lists. I was able to quickly and easily measure and monitor our progress on every requirement. This enabled us to measure where we were in the process, and identify any adjustments necessary. When needed, we could get specific information down to the individual patient level. These reports were invaluable in our quest for Meaningful Use.”

Hillside Medical initiated its 90-day meaningful use tracking period on May 1, 2011 and successfully completed attestation August 2, 2011. “At first, I monitored our progress by running reports daily to make sure everything was on track. As confidence increased, I started running the reports weekly, then every other week.”

Results

Gordon recognizes that their success is a result of the hard work and coordinated efforts of the Hillside Medical and Pulse teams in making the transition a smooth process in a relatively short time span Gordon stated, “We replaced our PM system, installed a complete EHR in place of our paper charts, interfaced our lab information system, interfaced with our reference lab provider, incorporated electronic prescribing, changed from paper phone messages to a fully integrated messaging and task system, replaced our entire computer hardware environment and achieved Meaningful Use in only one year. This would not have been possible without the strong dedicated efforts of our employees, physicians and Pulse personnel. I can’t thank everyone enough for their hard work.”

Hillside Medical was rewarded for their effort and success. In early August 2011, Hillside Medical received confirmation that it successfully met the Meaningful Use requirements by using a certified EHR in a meaningful way as required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to receive their first incentive payment. “This was a big milestone and we certainly take pride in what we have accomplished,” Gordon stated. “In order to survive, every clinic is going to have to implement EHR and the technology and processes are only going to improve. We are glad that we chose Pulse to partner with and together, the future looks very bright.”

